

Why Humility Matters Again

Speaker 0:10

Welcome to the Practical Missions Podcast. I'm your host. Today in the pod, we're talking about humility. When did humility go out of fashion in Christ Church? When did self-promotion and ego become normalized in ministry? Well, my guest today is the second time he's actually been on the podcast. The first time was in episode 87, Escaping the Insider Movement. I highly recommend you listen to it if you haven't. That was a fantastic conversation. I think today's conversation will also not disappoint you. My guest has recently been taking a deep dive into the life of George Whitfield, who lived from 1714 to 1770 and preach in England in the American colonies. He says Whitfield has a lot to teach us about humility in ministry. Well, I really do have a perfect guest for you today, so stay with us. All right. Well, welcome back to the podcast. I always love to have people uh who have recorded before. And we had such a fascinating conversation last time about your journey into missions and how you were kind of sucked up into the insider movement. And I still think it's such a yeah, just such an incredible story in how God used church history and other things to pull you out of that. And today we're gonna be talking about humility and humility for the cross-cultural worker, but for the Christian in general. And I'm just thinking, like, why is this an important conversation for you? Where's a good place to start?

Speaker 1 1:44

I think that there was a time, and I'll just say in kind of our evangelical value system where the exaltation of self and self-promotion was really frowned upon historically. I think when I when I came to faith, that was not something that um yeah, that was applauded or or in in any way, you know, tolerated. I think that there was a lot of pride, but it came across as it would it was packaged in false humility. It just wasn't self-exultation was just not well tolerated. That's fast forward 30 plus years, what I see is I I just see that we have a whole new cult of self. I think that the way media has developed, it's all about how many followers people have on social media. People name domain names after themselves, ministries after themselves. I think all of this is just defilement, to be honest. I think throughout most of church history, Christian leaders would have never thought of naming a ministry after themselves or promoting themselves. Somehow they got the memo. Jesus said, Apart from me, you can do, and every Christian that I know can finish that sentence. Jesus said, Apart from me, you can do nothing. And I'm looking at just a couple of New Testament examples. John the Baptist, he must increase, Jesus must increase, and I must decrease. We read that in John 3 30. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians said, For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ is Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. I mean, I find it interesting today that the Christian leaders might say we don't preach ourselves, but then they they turn around and they want to be served and be honored on the platforms. But Paul had it totally right. He said, Not only do we not preach ourselves, but we we ourselves are your servants. In the book of James, but he God gives grace, God gives more grace. Therefore it says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. James 4 6, and then you know, first Peter. If if something's been repeated in the New Testament, we should probably listen. He repeats the same thing, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. And before that, Peter said, Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility towards one another. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at

George Whitefield And The Great Awakening

Speaker 1 4:15

the proper time he may exalt you. First Peter five, five and six. So recently, to me, it was the best movie as a Christian. I think I've I I'm I'm calling it the best Christian movie I've ever seen. And I don't say that lightly. See a lot of Christian movies. There's some are some have been

great, others have been terrible. But last last spring, a movie came out called A Great Awakening, and it was all about the life and ministry of George Whitfield. First of all, I couldn't believe how little I knew about the influence that what would what the move of God that's was called the first great awakening. I had no idea of the impact that this move of God had on the foundation of the United States of America. Because it's not taught in our schools. In the movie, there's this line George Whitfield, who was an Anglican Presbyterian priest, who God began to use in the UK and then he started making trips over to the colonies. Um before, you know, we're talking about the 1700s. So George Whitfield's ministry was like from the 1730s until he died. He died when he was 55. Um, I want to say it was 1770 or 1780 when he died. Anyway, I'm forgetting the exact year of his death. I had no idea that God so used there was another man that people know, obviously John Wesley, that got involved. And this was at the same time you would know the Puritans were there, and so this was at the same time as the ministry of Jonathan Edwards, uh, who had a very relatively short ministry.

Speaker 5:51

He also died young, didn't he?

Speaker 1 5:52

Yeah. What I didn't realize is that we would not have had a the birth of our nation had it not been for this move of God that literally prepared our founding fathers for what was going to come. In the movie, that's this this line Benjamin Franklin is talking to his grandson. This is 16, 17 years after George Whitfield had died. And um, Benjamin Franklin was being asked by his grandson, wait, Grandpa, he's looking through his diaries because Whitfield, after he died, his diaries went to Benjamin Franklin. And so the grandson's looking through these, and he's like, Wait a second, Grandpa, you knew George Whitfield? See, George Whitfield was like, today, if we would take the most well-known actor, George Whitfield was the most well-known English-speaking personality in the English-speaking world. He was he was Tom Cruise meets name five other act, you know, Kevin Costner meets uh Tom Hanks. I mean, he was all of that and one guy, and yet he was a preacher of the gospel. Everybody knew Whitfield. In fact, during his ministry, and he he took, I think it was seven or twelve trips to uh I'm forgetting the number, he took a number of trips to the United States, uh what was before the United States to the colonies. Eighty-five percent of people that lived in the colonies heard George Whitfield preach in person.

Speaker 7:23

Whoa.

Speaker 1 7:23

Eighty-five percent. I asked people today in the United States, if you take our most well-known evangelist, right now it would probably be either Franklin Graham or maybe a guy named Greg Laurie. These are two kind of well-known stadium evangelists in in Christian circles. If you were to go out onto the streets and ask ten people if they knew either of those men, it might be one or two out of ten that would have heard of either of them. If you asked anybody in the 1700s, do you know George Whitfield? Everybody knew him. And he was a preacher of the gospel. So the impact of this guy's life was amazing. So in the film, George Whitfield's um, sorry, Benjamin Franklin's grandson says, Wait a second, grandfather, you you knew George Whitfield? He said, Yes. He said, Was he somehow a part of the revolution? And Benjamin Franklin, it's the most powerful scene in the movie, he takes off his glasses and looks at his grandson and says, Son, George Whitfield was the American Revolution. George Whitfield was the American Revolution. This is the the deist, Benjamin Franklin, actually raised a Puritan. I didn't know this.

His background was Puritan. He kind of turned away from his faith and and kind of lived his his life, you know, you know, more in a uh as a what we would call a deist. He kind of believed in God, but didn't really believe he was involved in the affairs of men. I got I got so fascinated by this guy's life seeing this film. I said, I I need to know, I need to know more about the life of this guy, George Whitfield.

Why This Hits Mission Workers
Speaker 9:05

Can I just stop you right there?

Speaker 1 9:06

Yeah, go ahead.

Speaker 9:06

I'm just thinking about the maybe the German or somebody else who's listening to this podcast right now, right? And you started off by saying we need to have humility. We why why do we have ministries in our name? Uh, and now you're talking about this guy who is wildly famous and setting up and helping the American Revolution. Yes. Help help me understand now before we go too deep into it, why this is relevant for the cross-cultural worker in an unreached place.

Speaker 1 9:36

Everybody I know that serves the Lord cross-culturally wants to be used of God, wants God to use them for the glory of God. That that they would every every I don't know a person that wouldn't say that. And and yet I'm looking at the life of this man that God used more powerfully than any other person in that generation. And I'm I'm I'm studying his life, I'm considering his life, and the thing that is sticking out as I'm going deep into the life of George Whitfield is that this guy was focused on humility and dying to himself. And and and there's a key here. Like the question I ask when I consider this is what was the key to this success? Why why was he so fruitful? And as I've been going into his biography, and that's what I wanted to just read and consider some of these quotes from his biography about humility, is that I believe that we have something to learn that's something that needs to be recovered. Is that like we just shared that scripture, if God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble, how in the world is it that we in ministry and and and in Christian ministry today, in so many parts of the world, is humility not emphasized. And I know that in that historically it was emphasized. Today there's other things that are emphasized that I don't think are healthy. I believe, I I really believe that in God's sovereignty, this movie is released and this highlight that God is actually trying to say something to the church. He says, guys, the recipe for success is we die to ourselves and God lives through us to his glory, and that and then by God's grace, things get accomplished for his kingdom. But it's it's Christ in us the hope of glory, not us in us, the hope of glory. I think that the life of George Whitfield and what he emphasized is something that God wants to reteach or remind us of. That's why I think it's relevant for the cross-cultural worker.

Speaker 11:50

What about the person who's left everything they have? Yeah. They've gone across the the ocean or whatever, you know, they're now in the Arab world or wherever they're at. They're working with refugees, they barely have anything. Would you say this cross-cultural worker has need to hear something about humility?

Speaker 1 12:07

Having lived in the region for over 30 years and now visiting the region since I left it, and having worked with many workers across the Muslim world, I would say that pride is one of the most widespread uh amongst people because, you know, people that are working in the Middle East or amongst Muslims somehow think, many of them, I mean they they don't say this openly, but we are in the most cutting-edge ministry, we are in the hardest place, uh reaching the hardest people. And and I mean, so in that whole environment, tragically, an incredible elite spirit that I think is disgusting. And I I have participated in that. I mean, we used to, I mean, I can tell you, I was, you know, in a fleshly way drawn to like, I want to go, I want to go preach the gospel where it's never been preached. And, you know, why would I waste my time where all these other workers go? And, you know, why why would we dare send another worker to that place where there's church on every corner? And so we're gonna go where the we're gonna go to the hardest people and the most unreached, and somehow, in the middle of all this, I what I have experienced and what I have seen is an elite spirit and pride that I think actually is going to cause us to be disqualified from being useful because God opposes those who are proud. So, how much are we gonna get done for the kingdom if the Holy Trinity himself is opposing us? We already know that the devil and all of his angels oppose us. The kingdom of darkness is in opposition, we have all of his kingdom and influence in terms of a fallen one opposing us, we have our own flesh, and now if we're proud, the Trinity himself is opposing us. That's what the Word of God says. So I think that this is probably I I I mean, I want to be useful to God. I mean, I'm uh you know, we want to be useful, we want our lives to be the kind of lives that God can use. And it's the irony is that of course, George Whitfield was pursuing this radical death to self, and then God began to use him in ways that was totally, he did not expect that these things would happen, that thousands would gather. Thousands would gather. And then, God forbid, we start to have some success in ministry, and people start coming to faith. I mean, when I came to the Middle East, the amount of MBBs, the amount of people coming from a Muslim background of faith was so few. I mean, even in countries now where there's hundreds and hundreds of believers, there was just a handful. And so now there's this new, a new temptation to pride is well, look at how God's using me and look at my methodology, or at like somehow it had something to do with you, you know. I remember when when teams started going into the former Soviet Union and some of the stuns across Central Asia, and people were coming to faith. And um, I remember people, they'd go on a summer outreach and you know, an outreach, and they'd come back, and people were coming to faith in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, all the stuns, Turkmenistan, and they'd come back and thinking, wow, I guess it was me. And I'm like, you know, I I I actually probably think it was the blood of the martyrs, which Tertullian said is the seat of the church. Do you know how many people were martyred in Central Asia for their faith when the Mongols came through and and persecuted the church that existed there? And and just the complete lack of like somehow you went going there was the key. And it's like, no, actually, when things happen, we should fall on our face and say, God, I just can't even believe that you would see fit to use somebody like me for your glory. And those of us that have, you know, I think there's a sobriety on people that have worked in really hard places where we haven't seen for some time people coming to faith readily, that can produce a humility because somehow when we get out here and we, you know, people think, hey, I'm, you know, we have better training than those other people that came before us and whatever, you know, a new, a new approach or a new tool or something like that. People begin to live out their life in this part of the world and they realize that, oh, okay, well, maybe it's not going to happen as quickly as I thought. I think that that that can produce humility. But then things are happening today. I mean, you know, things are happening across the region that are unprecedented, I believe, in church history. Since the time that Islam took root, we are seeing greater breakthroughs in these days across the region. I mean, from you know, across the Muslim world, like nothing we've ever seen before. So I think that maybe a another emphasis on humility is needed, just in case people would be tempted to think, well, it's because of me and my giftedness, or we had the greatest team, or or our strategy was better than somebody

else's. I find it funny because sometimes the worst possible strategies are the ones that God has used. I mean, I can tell you people that that are things that have that have caused people to come to faith that nobody would ever that was terrible. Terrible methodology. It's like, yeah, well, uh so anyway, that is kind of the frame, you know, that's kind of why I think this is relevant. But I think as we there's just some quotes I want to consider. I don't

Prayers That Kill Self Promotion
Speaker 1 17:25

know if we'll get through all of them, but I think they are so challenging. It has really produced uh a spirit of the fear of the Lord in my life. Is is that cool if we look at a couple of these quotes? Let's go for it. All right. I I'm gonna read a prayer of George Whitfield. His desire was that his name would be forgotten. So Whitfield's prayer, O Heavenly Father, for thy dear son's sake, keep me from climbing. Let me hate preferment for thine infinite mercy's sake, let me love a low, contemptible life, and never think to compound matters between the happiness of this world and the next. So just imagine, I I'm just the two lines out of this that just really keep me from climbing. I see people in ministry, and and really, when they start, the whole trajectory of their life is that I want to have greater and greater influence. I want to go up the ladder in leadership, and I'm trying to climb into a place, uh, whatever. And here he is, the greatest minister of the 1700s, and his prayers, Lord, keep me from climbing. See, he recognized that he had a propensity to want to climb. And so he said, Lord, keep me from climbing, and let me hate from being treated with preferred treatment. George Whitfield would not have required business class travel and five-star accommodation if he was coming out to be a conference speaker. He said, Let me hate preferment. This is so foreign in so much of professional ministry today. I mean, we used to invite people to come and minister to our teams and stuff, and I mean, I can tell you, just with incredible embarrassment, we would get like a like a list of things that were required. Like, we're gonna require business class travel for this leader, and this is the level of hotel that he needs to stay in, and this is what the honorarium. I mean, we want, you know, we're trying to bring somebody out to do a conference for workers and for other believers that, you know, what and and this, and we're getting like a list of demands. And yet, followers of the one who said, freely you've received, freely give, right? So again, I'm just looking at at the A-list celebrity, so to speak, you know, the number one guy of the 1700s, and it was his focus. I do not want to be the guy. I don't he literally was not looking for the fame, and yet he he just realized God is doing something. And and it was crazy. I mean, literally, he would preach three times a day to crowds of over 20,000 people. We have, you know, no microphones. You you can't even imagine. I mean, it's just it was a sovereign move of God. I'm I'm so tired today of people using the word revival. It's just such a throwaway term. Oh, it's revival now. You know, whatever college campuses in America are getting some kids that gather and you know, public baptisms and people are, oh, it's revival. And I'm like, you know, you know what revival is? Revival is George Whitfield would preach three times a day, and wherever he would show up, there would be 20 to 30,000 people. This was before social media could get people there. I mean, how it happened, you can't even imagine. Sometimes up to 35,000 people he's preaching to. And it's just incredible. And then the crowds would remain utterly silent and keep each other silent. You know how it is when you're around a big crowd, just the background noise, and you can't hear what's going on. It's incredible. Anyway, let's let's just move on. There's some others, and every time I consider one of these quotes, I can just apply it into my situation or into ministry. Listen to this. He was being praised. One of the places he first preached in the open air was in Bristol, England. And he said he was being praised in a letter from the people of Bristol. And so he wrote back to them this. I guess a guy named Mr. Harris had written him a letter praising him. He says, Oh, pray, dear Mr. Harris, that God would always keep me humble and fully convinced that I am nothing without him. He's asking for prayer. He's being praised. Please, he recognized, he didn't do false humility. He realized I have a love affair with myself, and I am going to despise that love affair, and I'm going to ask that God would keep me humble and that I would recognize that I am absolutely nothing

without him. Again, Jesus said, Apart from me, you can do nothing. I'll finish the quote. And that the good which is done upon earth, God doeth it himself. Sanctified, holy Father, to thine own glory and thy people's good. Move on to another one. And this is the one that I just can't even imagine many people would ever pray this prayer. He said, Let the name of Whitfield perish. But Christ be glorified. Let my name die everywhere. Let even my friends forget me. If by that means the cause of the blessed Jesus may be promoted. But what is Calvin and what is Luther? Let us look above names and parties. Let Jesus be our all in all, so that he is preached. I care not who is uttermost, I know my place, even to be the servant of all. Again, remember that quote from Paul. We do not preach ourselves, but Christ is crucified, and we ourselves as this as your servants. No preferment, no, like, hey, I need the green room, I'm the man of God, you know, we need our space. No, none of that. Whitfield understood. He was the servant of all. I am content to wait until the judgment day for the clearing of my reputation. And after I am dead, I desire no other epitaph than this. Here lies GW. He would never sign any of his correspondence with his full name, just GW, because it wasn't about him. What sort of man he was, the great day will discover. Just going back to the beginning of that. Let the name of Whitfield perish. Let my name die everywhere. Let even my friends forget me. The obsession, the driving obsession of many people's lives, the fear of people's lives, is that they will not be remembered. Or even the impact that they had for the kingdom would not be remembered. I was with a team last time I was in this country. They were just doing what they were doing and they were doing it. Nobody could see what they were doing. It was just serving the poor and preaching the gospel to the lost. And I remember telling them, I said, what you guys are doing, without any fanfare, nobody even knows about it. It's it would be dangerous for the people they work with to even broadcast what's going on. Nobody knows their names. And I said, This is the purest ministry I've seen in a long time because you guys are in secret serving Jesus and nobody knows what you're doing. You guys are seeing incredible things happen. There's many, many that have come to faith and being disciplined. And, you know, there are some of these ministers out there that they'll get a report by this, a team like this. They'll take it as their own and put it out there and oh, look what God. I mean, everybody in their grandma seems to be putting out a newsletter about what God's doing with the church in Iran, even though, even though they have nothing to do with the church in Iran. Now, we can, of course, glorify God with what he's doing. But I I looked at these guys and I said, shut down any influence that would come to you guys from the American church. It's defiled. Don't don't listen to our leaders, don't read their books, don't go to their conferences. It's all, it's all, to me, it's all chaff. I know I know I'm being radically critical, but I think it's true. What does that church have to teach people that are doing the peer ministry in secret? Nobody sees what they're doing, and they're just day by day living simply. They were this team was living in accommodation in a church building, just like, I mean, it was so they were not living in, you know, villas and driving around late model cars. I mean, just literally living like the book of Acts. Communally, I was looking for that word. I just see that George Whitfield was a guy who says, I don't even care if my friends remember who I am. I just want to be forgotten as long. It's not like it's not death to self like in a Buddhist way. Buddhists are into denial and death to self for for nothing's sake other than just death to self. Christian death to self is not death to self for the sake of you know self-abasement. It's it's death to self so that Jesus would get all the glory.

Speaker 26:25

Many times I've heard people at a at a conference or something like that, for

Legacy Without Needing Credit

Speaker 26:30

cross-cultural workers, they'll say, think about your legacy. What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind? And I think the point of the question is when we think about the legacy we want

to leave behind, maybe it will help us actually to live better while we do live. What do you think about that?

Speaker 1 26:47

I think that that is both a legitimate concern and an illegitimate one because real humility, I mean, I believe, look, look at the Apostle Paul. He said, We do not preach ourselves but Christ and Christ crucified, and we are your servants. We do not preach ourselves. There's no man in church history, uh, you know, save Jesus himself, that has been more influential than the Apostle Paul. So God used him. Even his the aim of his life was, you know what, I want Jesus to get all the glory. And I'll tell you, he was tortured, he was beaten, he was shipwrecked, arrested, forgotten. I mean, in his own time. I mean, it's incredible what he suffered and what he went through. Now, he has an incredible legacy. We can know that if we live our lives fully for Christ, there will be fruit that is born. The thing is, that obsession or that idea of legacy, when that hits the unsanctified flesh of a person, it becomes twisted. So I want to tell you a little story about something. So when we lived in this part of the world, I had a blog and I had a podcast, and we did everything anonymously. I wrote with a pseudonym. We would obscure locations, nobody knew who we were. We moved out of the region, and now I'm we're we moved back into a place where I no longer had to be concerned about security. And I had this thought. I had that thought, you know. Oh, I can, I know no longer I have to hide who I am. And then I got a question from the Lord. He said, Well, why would you want to do that? Why would you want to put your name on something that's about me and my kingdom and my glory? Why would you want to do that? And you know, you've heard this. When an omniscient being is asking us a question, he's not looking for information. And I knew the Lord was telling me, you will never put your name on anything that you ever do. Ever. Because if it is about me or you? Is it do you I mean, honestly, I I mean, this is this is a convicting thought. I believe in humility. I've been trying to emphasize this in my life, and you know, like a good, a good worker and a good pastor and coach and all this stuff. So we we have all of this talk that, oh, it's all for Christ's glory, and it's he apart from him, I can do nothing. And then we live another way. We live trying to share that glory or get a little credit, or you know, and I got tested. Literally, I wrote an article for a journal, and uh an author, fairly well-known guy, he's written a bunch of books. He said, I want to get something that you wrote and I want to get it published. I like what you wrote, and he had been this author had been influential in my life, and so I sent him a piece that I wrote, not to do anything with, I just wanted to share with him something I'd written. He said, I want to get this published. So he submitted it to a couple of journals, and the journals published the article, but they put his name on it. And he comes back to me and he's like, I am so sorry, I can't believe what happened. He didn't write it, I wrote it. He had the connections to get it published, and he had some suggestions, and I said, I don't think you understand. You don't need to do anything, you don't need to write a retraction, you don't need to redo it. The Lord told me I can never put my name on anything anyway. So the fact that it's out there and it's in your name, it doesn't matter. But the Lord tested me on that. I just, am I gonna be okay if if, you know, it is what's true and what I wrote and the emphasis is is that what matters, or is it that I somehow have my name or I get the credit for it? I think that's why this message is so relevant, is that people are driven by wanting to get credit. And I'm not saying if somebody does something, it is honorable to say, hey, listen, I want to just honor the fact that God used this person or whatever. We can honor other people. We we should honor other people. It's that our own emphasis should be listen, I'm not trying to promote myself. I'm not trying, I'm not trying to leave a legacy so that people will remember my name. I hope that I leave a legacy so that the name of Jesus is more famous in this part of the world. That's the legacy, not that who cares the tool that God had used. And God used amazing, God has used amazing tools throughout church history. You know the book, um, you've probably heard of it, Practicing the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence, right? Well-known book. In his life, nobody knew who he was, which is crazy. Somebody found his journal, and it wasn't even published until like a hundred years after he died. They started pulling stuff together. There

wasn't even an English version of it until 200 years after Brother Lawrence's death. And it's like the number one Christian book in English. I mean, one of them. Pilgrim's Progress might be up there, uh C.S. Lewis's Mere Christianity, but there's a couple, but it's one of them. But look at the legacy. This guy, he lived this life of humility, serving. He wrote some notes, and then, yeah. And it says we humble ourselves, and then it says in due time, God will exalt what what he wants to exalt. So to come back to that question of leaving a legacy, whose legacy is it that we want to be focused on? I want the legacy of Jesus. If I'm truly believing this, this word that we say is the word of God, it's his legacy that matters. And then that frees us. Like I think that this fear that people have of being forgotten. I thought about this where we live now, there's these cemeteries where famous celebrities are buried. And it's incredible. People go visit these things and they build these huge mausoleums. And I mean, the greatest fear of these people that were once famous in their life is that they would be forgotten. And so even in their death, their families or their followers or their fans are trying to prop them up, and people go, and I mean, it's just incredible. It just shows you people that live their lives obsessed with self and not being forgotten. And I see that that same tendency or that same temptation is all over ministry and all over missions and all over missionaries. I see that. George Whitfield was aware of it, he was aware of his own weakness, he was aware of what it could do

Hidden Pride And Ongoing Sanctification
Speaker 1 33:35

to him, and he fought against it. Yeah, go ahead.

Speaker 33:38

I have a question about that. So one could serve unseen, an unknown, an unnoticed, and have a horrible heart about it at the same time. Absolutely. How do we deal with that? How do we deal with the fact that maybe I could be serving an unknown and saying maybe I'm doing this for the Lord and not for myself? But actually, I I can't stand that I'm not getting recognition or that I'm not getting the thanks, or how do we deal with the heart issue?

Speaker 1 34:08

Well, I think I think we're also living in a time within just Christian culture where there is such an obsession with self and love of self that's tolerated. I've even gotten pushback because I've talked about some of these things. I'll be in a church or in a setting and we'll go into a QA time and like, well, it seems to me like you you don't really know your identity in Christ. If you're so it sounds like you've got a real negative view, you know, and and so this is part of that culture, like, hey, I'm God's favorite and I'm royalty. And you know, again, there's things that we have in Christ that are incredible, but you mix that with with unsanctified flesh, and then you have the hypergrace message, which is out there that says that people think I'm living without sin. See, Whitfield and Wesley had a major doctrinal issue between them because Wesley moved into this view, John Wesley, who also was a contemporary of George Whitfield, um, also a fellow Anglican, he came to the conclusion that we could live by God's grace, but that we could live without sin and perfection, sinless perfection.

Speaker 35:23

And he founded the Methodist denomination.

Speaker 1 35:25

Well, and they had their, and you know, to be fair, Whitfield was also influential in the formation because they all lived by a very strict method. But Wesley, and he got it really from the

Moravians, is where it was a he was influenced by the Moravians a good way, but I think his sinless perfection kind of ism came from from somehow from the Moravians. Well, Whitfield had a major issue with this. Whitfield had a healthy understanding that you know what, I have a love of self. This process of my sanctification is an ongoing thing. And there is a sin nature. I think we're living in a in a day and an age where this message in particular doesn't have a hearing because people are being, and it, you know, it's maybe it's a mixture of pop psychology, if you want to say, Christian counseling, trying to prop people up rather than people recognizing, you know what, I have an ongoing temptation. I've got to battle this war within. And I, you know, I don't, I don't get that people come to this conclusion without being somehow deluded because yeah, temptations and challenges change as we at at different stages in life. I work with some men that are I try and I'm trying to help guys in ministry that have different sexual addictions, addiction to pornography or recovering from sexual sin while they're in ministry. And, you know, I'm telling some of these guys, listen, I want to tell you right now, because some of them have this idea, like, oh, I want to, I think I want to get to a point where even if I saw an attractive woman, I I wouldn't be tempted, I wouldn't be, you know, attracted to that. And I said, I don't know what you think. God made us to be attracted to the female body. I'm just telling these men this. And I said, so the fact that we live in a culture where women walk around in this day and age showing so much of that body that is the problem. Uh, I mean, the problem for men is that historically men didn't have to take an eyeful when they walked down the street somewhere like we do today. But I said, your mind, you're you're gonna still have to battle that very battle when you're 80. You know, you might be 25 right now and you think I'm gonna get to this point. And some guys stopped working with me because they're like, well, what what hope is there in that? I said, the hope is that we can in Christ we can we can walk, we can walk with God in such a way that we're overcoming sin and we're not walk giving into it. But the fact that you what they want is they want to get to a point where they're no longer, it's there's never gonna even be a temptation. Well, Whitfield understood that you know what? And he and this was his bone to pick with Wesley, is that I understand that I have a weakness and a propensity to the flesh. As he became more and more well known, he knew that, okay, I have to battle this even more. I think we are living in an hour where we need to dust off this message. Hey, let's not forget death to self and an emphasis on humility. I don't see that it's being emphasized in many circles. Like when I came out to this part of the world, this was part of our training. Some of these great works, when I came out, one of the required books that we had to read was a book called Calvary Road by um Roy Hessian. They understood there was a move of God in East Africa um at that time, and this was the key. They say this was the key that led to this great move of God.

Speaker 38:53

So For somebody who doesn't know, what's the main idea of Calvary Road?

Speaker 1 38:57

Yeah, well, that the self needs to die and that he needs to live. I mean it's the same message, yeah. Let me let me move on. I had a couple I had a couple other quotes that I I won't get through all of them, but I do want to mention this. Um so here is Whitfield. He's he's been preaching to thousands and thousands of people, and and this is this was um out of his biography. The tide of popularity began to run very high. So he he understood how famous he was. In a short time, I could no longer walk on foot, but I was constrained to go in a coach from place to place to avoid the hosannas of the multitude. They grew quite extravagant in their applause, and had it not been for my compassionate high priest, popularity would have destroyed me. I used to plead with him, with the Lord, to take me by the hand and lead me unhurt through this fiery furnace. He heard my request and he gave me to see the vanity of all commendations but his own. So he was he was being so used of God, he his popularity couldn't even go anywhere without being hounded by people. So literally, it he not because he

wanted to avoid people, but so he could literally get from place to place, he would travel by coach, and then and he said, This popularity would have destroyed me. He recognized the temptation and he understood that popularity was a fiery furnace in and of itself. But then what was it that God did in his life? He realized, I'm playing for an audience of one, and the only commendation that mattered to him was the commendation that he was going to get. Well done, my good and faithful servant. I should mention this. He died at 55 years of age. He preached himself to death, literally. I mean, he died an untimely death. He probably needed some balance in his life. You know, we would talk about maybe being a little bit more balanced. He was not the best husband. Not that he was about it, just that he was so he was gone all the time and ministering all the time, and it it literally was the death of him. But I think he got this key.

Envy Elite Spirit And Real Community
Speaker 1 41:10

God will use me if I am, you know, if it's all about him.

Speaker 41:14

Pride takes all kinds of different forms. Absolutely. And it looks different for everyone, and everyone's kind of pulled by different things. Some people are pulled by fame. I know a lot of cross-cultural workers, this is something I've experienced, maybe something I've felt in myself as well. Is there can be a feeling of cross-cultural workers in hard places, and I say hard places because when I say hard places, I mean ministry is scant. You're not planting the first megachurch of wherever. Yeah. You know?

Speaker 1 41:43

Well, I would add to that, and even when it when you talk about places, when you start talking about people that are in isolated places and in villages in those places where it's just even harder to live and function. I've just been in in a neighboring country, and what was hitting me is as I was as we were just going around is just thinking, how are these people ever going to hear the gospel? And yet there's just a handful of workers in this city. And I said, You guys, I'm just thinking, and I and we we we interacted with some of these these workers, but they are literally in one of the most unreached Islamic cities of size in in the entire Muslim world. On a scale of things, these guys are are serving in a much harder place than somebody living in Dubai. There's a lot of people, and I'm not saying Dubai's you know uber reached or anything like that, but there's hundreds of workers that you know, essentially in a place like Dubai.

Speaker 42:42

My observation has been this that a lot of cross-cultural workers, but also ministers of small churches, I've also noticed that there's this feeling of I was kind of I was kind of hoping for more. Or even that my my ministry is smaller than my giftings are. And this desire for more, this almost this desire of like I should have a bigger impact because my my giftings, my visions, my capabilities, my capacities are bigger than this, or even the I've heard this one many times. If I was back in my home country, my ministry would be so much bigger. I'd be so much more effective.

Speaker 1 43:14

Yeah.

Speaker 43:15

You know, I mean this this this cuts right at the heart of what's going on inside the the the pride, maybe inside the heart of the cross-cultural worker.

Speaker 1 43:23

You're you've just crossed over into obviously another very relevant issue because I think I think you have a lot of envy and you have a lot of jealousy that goes on. We're all really good at acting like we would never acknowledge these things. So it's like it's like the hidden elephant in the room. Okay, everybody, let's face it, if we're all honest, this is where Whitfield is honest. I have a passionate love affair with myself, and my greatest enemy is gonna be me, myself, and I. He recognized that, he called it that, and he fought against it. We live in a culture where people aren't even acknowledging that that this is a problem, and they're completely out of the world. Of touch, so they're completely out of touch with their own pride. We don't have faithful friends in our lives that come alongside us and say, Hey, you know what? You're really arrogant. We, you know, faithful to the root wounds of a friend. So people surround themselves with people that tell them what they want to hear rather than what's really going on, which is, hey, listen, you know what? You're coming off as really elite. You're really, I mean, I'm coaching people right now. We're working with some situations, and I, you know, the problem is that this man or this woman or this team, they didn't have anybody through the years that were clipping their wings or giving them any kind of faithful impact, and now they're just causing damage around them, and they don't realize it's it's it's just the unsanctified self. They're not even aware of it because nobody's ever challenged it. Real Christian community must, we must be calling balls and strikes to use Americanisms. We have to be being truthful. What good is it if I have this huge blind spot and I'm a jerk and nobody ever tells me that? And I'm walking through life thinking that somehow I'm God's gift to the ministry when really I'm a jerk. A lot of Christian leaders I've known are jerks, and you get around them. And like, I will not exalt those people or recommend those people. I met one of my heroes recently. I met Josh McDowell. And it the way I met him was, you know, he's probably after like Billy Graham, the most significant Christian voice in English in the Western world, maybe in the last 50 years, Josh McDowell. He wrote over a hundred books. I said, haven't you written like 55 books? He said, It's 105, but not counting. I mean, and I just meet this guy. And I met him in a restaurant just by chance. He was more interested in what I was doing than what he has done. He was obviously a very influential guy in my life, especially back in when I was in college, and evidence that a man's a verdict and all of this stuff he was doing more than a carpenter, books that we've translated into Arabic, even. But the thing that struck me when I met Josh was that here's a guy who's been on state. He's spoken to millions, but in person, he's spoken to crowds of over 100,000. He was more humble than Proud Paul, the megachurch pastor down the street that has, you know, his mega church has a thousand people and he thinks he's all that. And I'm like, that's why I can recommend him to. I'm like, listen, Josh McDowell, the real deal, you know. What you come back to that issue of envy, because you're right. Whether somebody like George Whitfield is using is on a platform and he's recognizing I gotta fight this, or the church that has 25 people and has every doctrine right and assumes they're better than every other church, and you know, or whatever, or our ministry, we're doing ministry the way, you know, I'm doing ministry the way Jesus did it, and everybody else is doing it another way. It could be the same pride in operation, an elite spirit. What adds insult to injury is the person who's got doesn't seem to have the fruit or doesn't recognize or is not getting the platform or the recognition. They're envying those. And what does James say? It says, where envy and jealousy are present, there you will find every evil practice or every evil thing. The early church did not believe that the devil's first sin was pride. They believed his first sin was envy and his second sin was pride. Now, you know, people want to argue over that. I'm quoting the great Cyprian of the of the third century. He said, the apostate angel, he envied God's creation. He envied the love that God the Father had or the Trinity had for Adam and Eve, and it says, Oh, the sin of envy that caused an angel to fall. So it was believed universally, and it was the

consensus belief that envy was the first sin, and then pride we know, and proud was found in you. We have the Ezekiel and the Isaiah passage that allude to and speak of the fall of Lucifer before the devil. So now you have the dual. You have you have pride and you have envy in operation. Obviously, if we are focusing on death to self and humility, because it says humble yourselves, we have a role to play in it, right? Humble yourselves, and then God will take care of the rest. But if humility is there, I think that that extinguishes the envy. Because what does humility want? Humility says, I want you. I want your I want you to to increase, you know. I want you to have a fruitful ministry. You get the credit. It prefers others. Whereas pride says, I want to get, I want to get the credit. True humility, I mean, you see this, I didn't get to the quotes, but Whitfield and Wesley had all sorts of problems doctrinally as they went down. Wesley, he was the Arminian, and Whitfield was the Calvinist, and Wesley would preach against Whitfield. And yet when Whitfield would move on, or he would, he would give his ministry to John Wesley. The guy who was preaching against him and against his doctrines, and he would say things. You read in his diary, I pray that God uses you, John, to reach far more than I ever would have reached. I mean, literally, his heart's prayer was for and his theological competitor in the end, but Whitfield was so focused on humility, he also trusted that God's going to build his church and the gates of Hades are not going to prevail against it. He he trusted in the sovereignty of God. So he was he was a good Calvinist, not just, you know, consistent. He was a consistent Calvinist. He believed that God would accomplish it. So whether God could use John Wesley, even though he disagrees with me on these issues. But I love that about Whitfield was interested in seeing he would give ministry away. He would move on. Today, you know, somebody builds a little kingdom and then he guards it as his own. This is my kingdom, this is my church, these are my disciples, my like, what my followers? Like, stop talking about your followers. That should never come out of the mouth of a Christian that I have followers, you know, and then you hear them. Follow me on social media, follow me on my YouTube channel, follow me, follow me, follow me. And I'm like, do you hear yourselves, guys? Are we preaching ourselves or are we preaching Christ and us as his servants? Anyway, I have energy on this topic. I think it's a relevant issue. I think that we

Daily Humility Practices And Closing Speaker 1 50:35

as workers, we have to come back again and again. Lord, see if there be any wicked way in me. Examine me, Lord. Search me, oh God, and know my heart. Try me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in me. I don't have it in my notes today to to to share, but but it's this humility prayer. If you if somebody googles it, it will come up. I think it's called the litany of humility. It came out of a of a Catholic tradition. But I started praying this prayer when I first moved to the region back in the early 90s. I just started praying this prayer, and it was always like a check and a balance. Lord, is there any pride? Because you know, when you first show up and you don't speak a word, and then all of a sudden after you've been here for six months, you think, Oh, my Arabic is so good. What you start thinking that way, and then after two or three more years, you realized I I don't know what I was thinking, but now and and then and then after whatever. The point is there's always this temptation, you know. Oh, I now I have experience, or now we have some disciples, or now we have some fruit, or or or now I'm leading this team, or now I've been promoted to this, or whatever, whatever the case may be. I would keep praying this humility prayer over and over and over again. And you know, here I am now. I turned 60 this year. It sounds like I'm ancient. To me, that sounds ancient. The relevance of praying that prayer every day, or whenever I remember to pray it, I I can't, I I'd be lying to say I'd pray it every day. But when I revisit it and I pray it, I realize, oh, I still have a long way to go. And and you know what? In some areas, maybe I have really grown. And in in an area of my life, there's been, you know, some real fruit in that area. I really see progress. I don't want to say, you know, I'm I'm no longer need humility there, but like just I've seen growth, stuff that I used to struggle with, maybe I'm not struggling with. Well, this is the way it is in life in ministry, is that the issues change all the time. Stuff that I no longer struggle with. Now I now I have new

struggles of of pride. Like I I had a you know a recent experience where you know I met some guys who have been in the field about five minutes and didn't care what I thought about anything. And I'm looking at what they're doing and going, they could use a lot of help. And then I'm sitting there going, wait a second, I'm actually being tested here. I feel like I should be consulted. And the fact is that just in the natural, I could have helped a lot with some of the stuff that I was hearing and stuff of the stuff that's going on. And yet here these guys were that have been here five minutes, and like corporately, you probably could have put you put all these people together and they probably spoke about you know five percent of the Arabic I did, but they knew everything and they had it all figured out. And I remember when I was new, I thought I had it all figured out and I had my method, like when I was in the insider movement. This is how God, this is gonna, we're gonna pray in mosques and we're gonna be Muslims, and and I just realized now I've got a whole different temptation to pride, or like now I've got these young guys who, you know, don't want to learn from somebody who's been around a while, and I'm being offended. And I'm just like, Lord, I'm gonna take that as your discipline. You're you're just revealing to me. Hey, just when you think, you know what, why why was it so important that those guys wanted your advice or your counsel or or your whatever, your whatever you thought you might. I mean, I didn't go with that expectation, but you know, if they would have said, Hey, is there anything you know you would share, we're just new here or whatever, I would have had a few things to share with them. But I I remember I went back and talked with my wife about it, and she said, Yeah, and I'm sure that was really hard. I said, Yeah, but it also showed me that I still have some ways to go. That why why did I need to be consulted? Why did I need to be considered the experienced, you know, hey, let's hear some of your stories or whatever. What was it in me that wanted that recognition or wanted that honor? And um, so anyway, there we go.

Speaker 54:40

Hey, you've given me a lot to think about. So grateful for your time. Thanks for being on the pod with me again.

Speaker 1 54:47

Yeah, it's great. And I I I hope it was useful and helpful and encouraging. And I know just for me to process this stuff and share it, whether or not anybody else is needs to listen in or not. I do believe, though, that that this is something that God is emphasizing in this hour and that he wants us to recover. A church that's far less obsessed with itself and its followers and its impact and influence. Influence is godly, but it can also be twisted. God bless you, man.

Speaker 55:17

Amen to that note. God bless you, man. I feel both encouraged and convicted in so many ways. I'm praying that the Lord gives me the courage and the strength to live a life of humility both before him and before the people around me. May my name die and his name be exalted. Now, before we leave, I just want to remind you that it's okay to be normal.